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SHOT IN THE **DARK**

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★ No. 89 **NO HIGHER STAKES**

Tanks . . . guns . . . men . . . all were mere pieces on his chessboard of war

★ No. 90 **SPOILS OF WAR**

Flying roughnecks of Transport Command—their cargo—TROUBLE!

★ No. 91 **COVER OF DARKNESS**

His was a fighting spirit that would never die . . .

★ No. 92 **ONE MAN'S GLORY**

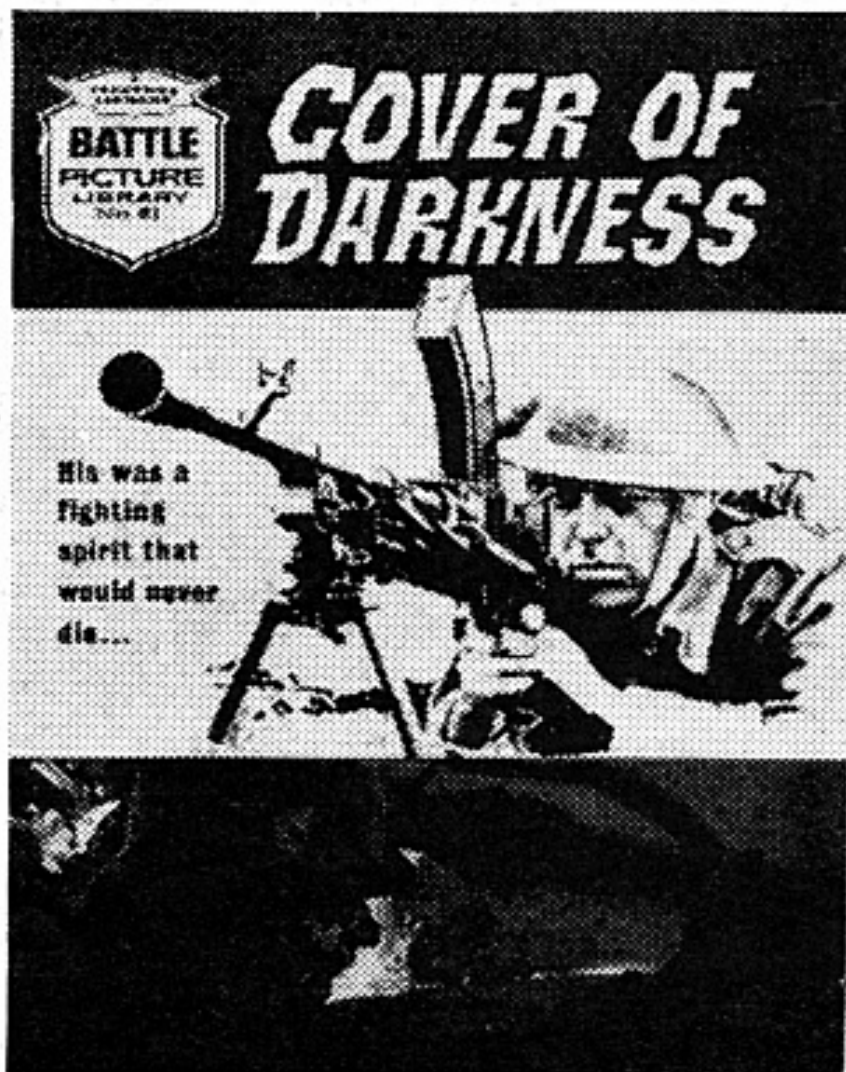
Bofors v. Panzers . . . in a duel to destruction

BATTLE PICTURE LIBRARY

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SHOT IN THE DARK

IN ORDER TO STAY ALIVE, THE SOLDIER MUST BUILD HIS OWN WALL OF PROTECTION FROM THE ELEMENTS OF CUNNING AND COURAGE WITHIN HIMSELF. THEN HE MUST SMOTHER HIS NATURAL SYMPATHIES UNDER AN ARMOUR OF HARDNESS...



Chapter 1. Mutiny

IT WAS JANUARY, 1942. FOR FIVE DAYS THE BRITISH COLUMN HAD HACKED THEIR WAY THROUGH THE BURMESE JUNGLE. THE SUFFERINGS OF HIS COMRADES ONLY HEIGHTENED THE NIGHTMARE OF WAR FOR CORPORAL CON TRACE...



I'VE HAD IT, MATE!
I CAN'T... GO NO
FARTHER...

CORPORAL!
GREEN'S
COLLAPSED!

A WEEK BEFORE, THE JAPANESE ARMIES HAD POURED ACROSS THE FRONTIERS OF SIAM INTO BURMA. SO FAR, NONE OF THE MEN IN THE PATROL HAD SET EYES ON A JAP. ONLY ONE OF THEM KNEW WHERE THEY WERE GOING... AND WHY...

STICK IT, GREEN!
IT'LL BE DARK
SOON, THEN YOU
CAN HAVE A
NICE LONG
REST!

IT'S NO... USE,
CORP! MY LEGS...
THEY'VE PACKED
UP ON ME...!



CON TRACEY LIFTED THE EXHAUSTED MAN UPRIGHT.

COME ON, MATE.
I'LL HELP YOU!
YOU CAN DO IT!

I'LL TRY, CORP...
I'LL TRY!

BY NOW, THE HEAD OF THE COLUMN WAS OUT OF SIGHT. THE MEN WHO HAD STAYED WITH TRACEY LOOKED AT EACH OTHER WITH ANGRY EYES...

CON AGAIN... IT'S
ALWAYS CON! THAT
OTHER DEVIL WOULD
HAVE LEFT GREEN
BEHIND!

IT'S A PITY TRACEY AIN'T
COMMANDING THE CAPER
INSTEAD OF THAT GLORY
HUNTER FANE! HE'LL
KILL US ALL!



Shot in the Dark

THE GOING GOT STEADILY TOUGHER. TRACEY WAS LAST NOW, HALF-CARRYING HIS LOLLING BURDEN UP THE MUDDY SLOPE OF A FOOTHILL ...

KEEP TRYING, GREEN! YOU'RE DOING FINE, MATE!

LEAVE ME, CORP! JUST LEAVE ME... I'VE HAD IT!



THE OTHERS WERE WAITING FOR TRACEY IN THE CLEARING AT THE TOP OF THE HILL. ONE MAN STOOD UPRIGHT... A TALL, GAUNT MAN, WITH HARSH, RESTLESS EYES ...

MY ORDERS WERE CLEAR, CORPORAL! ANY MAN WHO DROPS OUT GETS WATER AND RATIONS ... BUT HE STAYS WHERE HE FALLS!

GREEN'LL BE ALL RIGHT, SIR! HE JUST NEEDS A LITTLE REST ... LIKE WE ALL DO ...



CAPTAIN PAUL FANE STIFFENED. HIS VOICE WAS QUIET, BUT HARD...

I'M SORRY TO DISAPPOINT YOU, CORPORAL! WE'RE PUSHING ON! THERE WILL BE NO REST UNTIL WE REACH THAT VILLAGE!

BUT, SIR... THE MEN HAVE HAD ABOUT AS MUCH AS THEY CAN STAND!



FANE LOOKED LONELY STANDING THERE, A TOMMY-GUN GRIPPED IN HIS HANDS...

THAT'S ENOUGH, TRACEY! MY ORDERS ARE GOING TO BE CARRIED OUT... IF I HAVE TO KILL ANYONE WHO TRIES TO BUCK ME! NOW PUT THAT MAN DOWN!



THE MEN WERE SILENT AS TRACEY LOWERED GREEN GENTLY. THE CAPTAIN GLANCED BRIEFLY AT THE LIMP, HUDDLED SHAPE...

IF EVERYTHING WORKS OUT, WE'LL PICK HIM UP ON THE WAY BACK! THAT'S ALL WE CAN DO....



THEY MOVED OFF AGAIN, THROUGH THE DRIPPING GRASS AND THE WHITE BAMBOOS. CON TRACEY LOOKED BACK AT THE DROOPING SHAPE IN THE CLEARING...

GREEN'S HAD IT, CORP! HE HASN'T A CHANCE, LEFT ON HIS OWN IN THIS HELL-HOLE... AND FANE KNOWS IT!

YEAH... HE KNOWS IT! BUT FANE GIVES THE ORDERS, AND WE'VE GOT TO TAKE 'EM!



THE CORPORAL PUSHED ON UP THE COLUMN OF EXHAUSTED MEN. ALREADY, THEY WERE BEGINNING TO LAG BEHIND THE GAUNT, TIRELESS OFFICER WHO LED THEM.

THE MEN ARE RIGHT, FANE! YOU'RE JUST A GLORY HUNTER! THEY TOLD US THIS WAS A DEEP PATROL TO TEST JAP ACTIVITY! A FEW MINUTES EITHER WAY WOULDN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE!



THEY KEPT MOVING THROUGH THE NIGHT. THE SUDDEN, ICY CHILL WAS ALMOST AS BAD AS THE HEAT. BUT THE STUMBLING MEN DID NOT NOTICE THE COLD...



TWO HOURS AFTER DAWN, THEY HALTED BELOW AN EXPOSED RIDGE OF KUNAI GRASS. THE MEN STOOD THERE, MISERY ON THEIR FACES, AS THE CAPTAIN CALLED TO CON TRACEY...



TRACEY HAD NO CHANCE TO TALK. THE CAPTAIN POINTED BRISKLY ACROSS THE JUNGLE AT THE BROWN THRUST OF A HILL...

I THOUGHT I SAW SOMETHING MOVE OVER THERE! MAYBE YOUR EYESIGHT'S KEENER THAN MINE, TRACEY! TAKE A LOOK THROUGH THESE GLASSES...!



CON TRACEY HAD SHARP EYES. IT DID NOT TAKE HIM LONG TO PICK OUT THE LINE OF SOLDIERS MOVING BOLDLY ACROSS THE FLANK OF THE HILL...

YOU WERE RIGHT, SIR! THEY'RE JAPS... ABOUT A DOZEN OF THEM...!



FANE WAS TURNING BACK TOWARDS THE CLEARING ALMOST BEFORE TRACEY HAD FINISHED ...

RIGHT! WE'LL HAVE TO MAKE A DETOUR! ON YOUR FEET, YOU MEN! LET'S MOVE!

SIR...! WAIT A MINUTE!



FANE WHIRLED AS THE CORPORAL SHOUTED. THERE WAS A TRACE OF SARCASM IN THE TOUGH, FLAT VOICE ...

WELL, CORPORAL? HAVE YOU A BETTER IDEA?

YES, SIR! I SUGGEST WE POST LOOK-OUTS ON THE RIDGE WHILE THE OTHER MEN REST! AS SOON AS THE COUNTRY'S CLEAR, WE CAN MOVE ON!



TRACEY'S LOUD, EAGER VOICE HAD CARRIED TO THE OTHER MEN. THEY SHOULDERS FORWARD NOW, LED BY A STOCKY, BARREL-CHESTED PRIVATE...

THE CORP'S RIGHT, SIR! IT AIN'T GONNA DO NO HARM IF WE LIE LOW FOR A BIT!

YEAH... THIS IS A PATROL, NOT A DEATH MARCH!

YOU TELL HIM, YORKY!



TRACEY HEARD THE MUTTERINGS OF DISCONTENT. THEY DISTURBED HIM A LITTLE. HIS VOICE WAS SLOW...

YOU'VE GOT TO DO IT, SIR! THE MEN HAVE BEEN PUSHED TOO HARD!

THAT'S ENOUGH, TRACEY! WE'RE MOVING ON, I SAID! YOU'RE SOLDIERS... NOT SCHOOLBOYS ON A HIKE!



THE BIG MAN, YORK, WAS STANDING BEHIND THE CAPTAIN. HE MOVED IN FAST, GROWLING MURDEROUSLY, HEFTING HIS RIFLE

NO, FANE! WE'VE
HAD ENOUGH...
ENOUGH, D'YOU
HEAR?

WHAT
THE DEVIL...?

YORK!
NO...!



FANE WAS TWISTING WITH AN OATH ON HIS LIPS WHEN THE RIFLE BUTT HIT THE BACK OF HIS SKULL. HE COLLAPSED THEN, LIKE THE SOLDIER, GREEN, HAD COLLAPSED



TRACEY STARED UNEASILY AT THE SENSELESS FIGURE AT HIS FEET: BUT THE RAVAGED FACES AROUND HIM WERE DEFIANT...

YOU SHOULDN'T
HAVE DONE IT, YORK!
NOT THIS ----!

WHY NOT? HE'S LIKE
A MAD DOG! WOULD
YOU RATHER WE JUST
STOOD AROUND AND
LET HIM KILL US OFF
ONE BY ONE?

DON'T WORRY,
YORKY! IF FANE
BRINGS A CHARGE,
WE'LL BACK YOU
UP, MATE!



THE CORPORAL LOOKED ROUND
AT THE FILTHY, MUTINOUS MEN.
HIS VOICE HARDENED...

WELL, IT'S DONE NOW! THERE'S NO
GOING BACK! YORK... YOU'D BETTER
TAKE FIRST STAG! GET UP ON THAT
RIDGE AND KEEP YOUR EYES SKINNED
FOR JOHNNY JAP! THE REST OF YOU
GRAB SOME SLEEP!

SLEEP!
NOW YOU'RE
TALKING,
CORP----



PAUL FANE CAME ROUND TWO HOURS LATER. HE SAT UP, PLUCKING AT THE FRESH BANDAGE AROUND HIS HEAD. HE SAW THE SPRAWLED SHAPES OF THE SLEEPING MEN ...

MY...MY HEAD!
TRACEY! WHAT
THE DEVIL'S
GOING ON?

TAKE IT
EASY, SIR!



THE CAPTAIN SWAYED UPRIGHT...

I'M SORRY FOR WHAT HAPPENED,
SIR... BUT THESE ARE MEN, NOT
ROBOTS WITHOUT FEELINGS!
LET THEM SLEEP! YOU'LL GET
MORE OUT OF 'EM!

YOU FOOL,
TRACEY! YOU
DON'T KNOW WHAT
YOU'VE DONE!




FANE'S HARSH EYES SWEEPED THE RIDGE. PRIVATE YORK WAS SITTING AGAINST A TREE UP THERE. BUT HE WAS NOT LOOKING FOR JAPS ...

THAT MAN...
HE'S ASLEEP!
AND WITH JAPS ABOUT!
GOOD GRIEF!



THE JAPS WERE CLOSER THAN FANE KNEW. THE PATROL WHICH TRACEY HAD SIGHTED TWO HOURS BEFORE HAD MOVED FAST ALONG THE RIDGE. ITS COMMANDER SAW THE CAPTAIN AS HE STRODE TOWARDS YORK...

KETO!
HAIRY ONE!



CON. TRACEY WAS COMING UP HARD BEHIND THE CAPTAIN WHEN THE JAPS OPENED FIRE. FANE CRIED OUT, CLAWING HIS SHOULDER. THE HARSH SOUND JERKED PRIVATE YORK AWAKE...

AAGH!



WHAT THE
JAPS!

THE JAPS WERE STILL FIRING AS TRACEY SLUNG THE WOUNDED CAPTAIN OVER HIS SHOULDER. HE LUNGED DOWN INTO THE CLEARING, YELLING AT THE SLEEPING MEN. BUT YORK WAS TOO LATE ...



EVEN TRACEY'S VOICE, THE WHINING LEAD, COULD NOT FULLY PENETRATE THE COCOON OF EXHAUSTION. SOME OF THE MEN DIED AS THEY JERKED SLUGGISHLY UPRIGHT ...



THE BRITISH WERE WIDE AWAKE AS THEY HIT THE JUNGLE. FEAR AND SHOCK DISSOLVED THE MISTS OF SLEEP. THE JAPS FOLLOWED THEM...



THEY WENT FAST THROUGH THE JUNGLE, WITH THE THICKETS WHIPPING AT THEIR BODIES. BUT THEY DID NOT GET VERY FAR FOR THEY CAME TO A HIGH, UNBROKEN WALL OF ROCK...



PAUL FANE WAS STILL UNCONSCIOUS. TRACEY DUMPED THE OFFICER BENEATH AN OVERHANG OF ROCK, SWUNG ROUND ON THE CRINGING MEN...

SPREAD OUT! FALL BACK AGAINST THE ROCK... AND KEEP FIRING!

WHAT AT, CORP? WE CAN'T EVEN SEE THE PERISHERS!

THERE WAS NO COVER IN THE CLEARING. THEY JUST HAD TO LIE THERE AND TAKE IT. THE SOLDIER CROUCHING NEXT TO CON TRACEY STARTED TO MOAN.

THEY'RE PICKING US OFF... ONE BY ONE! IT'S CURTAINS, I TELL YOU---

SHUT UP! SHUT UP!



THE SOLDIER'S VOICE WAS BUBBLING WITH FEAR WHEN THE CORPORAL SLAPPED HIM ACROSS THE FACE. CON TRACEY WAS LEARNING TO FIGHT THE HARD WAY.

SNAP OUT OF IT!
GET A HOLD OF
YOURSELF! ALL WE
NEED NOW IS A
DOSE OF PANIC...

CORP! THE
CAPTAIN---



TRACEY WHIRLED AT THE SHARP CRY: PAUL FANE WAS SITTING UP. THERE WAS A HEAVY SERVICE .45 REVOLVER IN THE CAPTAIN'S HAND, AND HE WAS PUSHING THE MUZZLE TOWARDS HIS TEMPLE...

NO YOU
DON'T, FANE!



THE MUZZLE OF THE .45 WAS PRESSING INTO JANE'S WHITE FLESH WHEN THE CORPORAL WRENCHED THE GUN SAVAGELY AWAY. THERE WAS NO RESPECT IN TRACEY'S FACE NOW...

SUICIDE, EH, CAPTAIN? THAT'S A NEW ANGLE FOR YOU! WHAT'S THE MATTER...SCARED TO FACE WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IF THE NIPS TAKE YOU ALIVE?

NO, TRACEY... I'M NOT... SCARED! YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND...

A NEAR MISS THRASHED ROCK-SPLINTERS INTO THE CORPORAL'S FACE. HE THREW HIMSELF DOWN WITH THE HARD WORDS SPITTING FROM HIS MOUTH...

I UNDERSTAND, ALL RIGHT! I'VE SEEN YOUR KIND BEFORE, CAPTAIN! TOUGH... UNTIL THE CHIPS ARE DOWN! THEN THE YELLOW STARTS TO SHOW!

NO, TRACEY! YOU'RE WRONG... YOU'RE WRONG...!



BULLETS WERE STILL LASHING THE HOLLOW, GROPING FOR THE HELPLESS TARGETS. NOW AND THEN, A MAN WOULD GROAN SOFTLY, AND LIE STILL. THERE WAS A VOICE, CALLING RAGGEDLY TO CON TRACEY...

CON... WE GOTTA MAKE A BREAK! THEY'LL KILL US LIKE RATS IN A TRAP!



WE'LL GO WHEN I'M READY, SOLDIER...AND WE'LL TAKE THE WOUNDED WITH US! GET YOUR HEAD DOWN AND USE THAT RIFLE!

TRACEY'S VOICE WAS HARSH, COMMANDING, HIDING HIS OWN FEAR. HE WAS TRYING TO CONVINCE HIMSELF THAT THEY STILL HAD A CHANCE WHEN CAPTAIN FANE STARTED TO MUMBLE BEHIND HIM...

ONLY ONE...WAY, TRACEY!
TAKE A CUE FROM THE
JAP! PLAY...DEAD...

PLAY DEAD?
YEAH...YEAH,
THAT'S IT!



THE JAPS HAD SITED A MACHINE-GUN ON A SHELTERED KNOLL ABOVE THE HOLLOW. THE UGLY CLATTER OF IT DROWNED THE VOICE OF CON TRACEY AS HE CALLED TO THE OTHERS...

LISTEN, MEN! SCREAM, ROLL
OVER...ANYTHING--JUST SO
LONG AS THEY THINK WE'VE
BOUGHT IT! IT'S OUR
ONLY CHANCE...



THE JAP. COMMANDER MUST HAVE ORDERED AN ENFILADE. THE NEXT VOLLEY WAS LONG AND VICIOUS: THE TRAPPED BRITISH SOLDIERS PLAYED THEIR PARTS WELL. BUT, FOR SOME, THE ACT OF DYING WAS REAL...




THE FIRING DIED DOWN OVER THE HOLLOW. THERE WAS NO MOVEMENT THERE NOW. NO SOUND... EXCEPT THE TINNY VOICE FROM THE JUNGLE...

THEY ARE EITHER DEAD OR WOUNDED! MOVE IN AND FINISH THE WORK! BUT IF THE OFFICER IS STILL ALIVE... SPARE HIM! HE WILL ANSWER A FEW QUESTIONS BEFORE HE DIES!



THE JAPS HAD SWEEPED INTO BURMA ON A TIDE OF VICTORY. THE LITTLE SOLDIERS WERE GRINNING CONFIDENTLY AS THEY MOVED DOWN INTO THE HOLLOW, MAKING PLENTY OF NOISE ...

THE WHITE DOGS
FOUGHT BRAVELY, BUT
THEY ARE NO MATCH
FOR THE NIPPON!

A black and white comic panel showing a soldier in a pith helmet and uniform looking through a trench. In the background, Japanese soldiers are advancing through a jungle-like area with palm trees. The scene is set in a hollow.

THE JAPS WERE ALL STANDING IN A TIGHT LITTLE GROUP WHEN CON "TRACEY" JERKED UPRIGHT, WITH HIS TOMMY GUN SHUDDERING ...

NOW!
GIVE IT
TO 'EM!

A black and white comic panel showing a soldier in a pith helmet running through a trench. He is carrying a Tommy gun and a canteen. In the background, Japanese soldiers are visible. The scene is set in a hollow.

WITH YOU,
CON ...

EUGH!

THEY WERE FEW IN NUMBER, THE BRITISH. BUT THEY HAD THE ADVANTAGE OF SURPRISE.



IT WAS
A TRICK...
AAARGH!

IT WAS OVER QUICKLY. CON TRACEY LOOKED BRIEFLY AT THE DEAD JAPS. ONLY A HANDFUL OF MEN STOOD UPRIGHT IN THE BLOOD-STAINED HOLLOW...

SEVEN OF US....
SEVEN! IS THAT
ALL THAT'S
LEFT?

WE'D ALL BE
LYING THERE, CORP...
BUT FOR YOU!

THERE'S EIGHT
OF US... IF YOU
COUNT FANE!



CAPTAIN FANE WAS STILL LYING UNCONSCIOUS AGAINST THE ROCK FACE. THE MEN LOOKED TOWARDS HIM NOW, HARSHLY...

GUESS WE MAY AS WELL HEAD BACK! ONLY FANE KNEW WHERE WE WERE GOING, ANYWAY.

I SAY WE LEAVE HIM...LIKE HE LEFT GREEN, AND THE OTHERS.



VICIOUS MOMENTS BEFORE, CON TRACEY HAD KILLED TO STAY ALIVE. IN SOME WAYS, HE WOULD NEVER BE THE SAME. BUT HE WAS STILL A SOLDIER...

NO! WE'RE NOT LOWERING OURSELVES TO HIS LEVEL! WE'LL DRESS HIS WOUND, MAKE A LITTER AND WE'LL CARRY HIM, SOMEHOW.

ALL RIGHT, CON... IF THAT'S HOW YOU WANT IT! BUT IF IT WAS LEFT TO ME...



THEY TURNED SOUTH INTO THE JUNGLE, CARRYING THE ROUGH, BAMBOO LITTER.

ALL RIGHT, TUG... TAKE
A BREATHER! I'LL STAY
ON THIS END!

NOTHING DOING,
CORP! IF YOU CAN
STICK IT, SO
CAN I...



THEY REACHED THE BRIGADE'S BASE CAMP SIX DAYS LATER.
TRACEY WAS STILL CARRYING THE LITTER. HE LOWERED IT NOW, WITHOUT
SPEAKING.

ARE WE...
BACK...?

YEAH! WE'RE
BACK, CAPTAIN!
WHAT'S LEFT OF US!



THE OTHER MEN DID NOT HEAR THE CORPORAL'S LOW, TENSE VOICE...

BUT BEFORE WE GO DOWN THERE, CAPTAIN, THERE'S ONE THING I WANT TO GET STRAIGHT! IF YOU TELL THEM ABOUT YORK, EVEN THOUGH HE'S DEAD... THEN I'LL REPORT THAT A BRITISH OFFICER TRIED TO KILL HIMSELF... BECAUSE HE WAS SCARED OF BEING CAPTURED ALIVE.

CAPTAIN FANE SMILED THINLY, BUT WITHOUT BITTERNESS. HIS WORDS SHOOK TRACEY...

I WON'T REPORT YORK, CORPORAL! BUT I'M GOING TO TELL THEM HOW WELL YOU HANDLED THINGS AFTER I WAS WOUNDED! I SHALL ALSO TELL THEM HOW I TRIED TO COMMIT SUICIDE!

YOU'LL REPORT THAT? BUT THEY'LL BREAK YOU...

FANE SHOOK HIS HEAD, WEAKLY, BUT THE SMILE WAS STILL THERE...

I DON'T THINK SO, TRACEY! WHEN I TRIED TO COMMIT SUICIDE, IT WAS FOR A VERY GOOD REASON! BUT I CAN'T TELL YOU... EVEN NOW!

PAUL FANE WAS STILL TALKING AS THEY PICKED UP THE LITTER, WENT DOWN TO THE GREEN FIELDS AND THE CLEAN WHITE TENTS ...



CON TRACEY HAD LISTENED TO THE FLAT, VAGUE WORDS, BUT HE COULD STILL SEE THE MEN FALLING AND DYING... BEING LEFT TO DIE...



BUT IN TIME, CON TRACEY WAS TO LEARN THE BITTER TRUTH OF CAPTAIN PAUL FANE'S WORDS... IN ONE OF THE MOST SAVAGE AND HEROIC BATTLES OF THE BURMA CAMPAIGN...

Chapter 2. *The Ridge*

FOR TRACEY, THE LESSON BEGAN A YEAR LATER, WHEN THE JAPS ATTACKED ALONG THE WHOLE BURMA FRONT, SPLITTING THE BRITISH-CHINESE ARMIES WITH A SERIES OF LIGHTNING THRUSTS...



THE LITTLE SOLDIERS CAME ON FRANTICALLY. THEY CLIMBED OVER THEIR DEAD, CHARGED SCREAMING INTO THE MOUTHS OF THE BRITISH GUNS...



THE COUNTER-OFFENSIVE WITH WHICH THE BRITISH 14TH ARMY WOULD FIGHT ITS WAY BACK INTO BURMA HAD ALREADY BEEN PLANNED. BUT FIRST THE ENEMY ADVANCE MUST BE HALTED ...

EVERY AVAILABLE REGIMENT IS BEING PULLED FROM RESERVE TO FORM A WEDGE ON WHICH THE JAPANESE OFFENSIVE MUST BE BLUNTED!

BUT HOW LONG WILL THAT TAKE, SIR?



AT LEAST TWO DAYS TO MOVE THE TROOPS TO NEW POSITIONS! I AM PLACING UNITS OF BATTLE-EXPERIENCED MEN AT SEVERAL KEY-POINTS! THEIR ROLE WILL BE VITAL!

... AND UNENVIABLE! THEY'LL HAVE TO TAKE THE FULL WEIGHT OF THE JAPANESE ATTACK ~~~ WITHOUT ANY HOPE OF IMMEDIATE SUPPORT.

THE GENERAL LOOKED THOUGHTFULLY AT HIS MAP ...

THE AREA THAT MOST CONCERNS ME IS ... THE KUANA RIDGE! IF THE JAPS TAKE THAT HIGH GROUND, THEY WILL COMMAND GOOD OBSERVATION OF OUR MOVEMENTS, AND THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE WILL BE LOST...



IN THE LAST ANALYSIS, GENTLEMEN...
THE WHOLE SUCCESS OF THE ALLIED THRUST
INTO BURMA MAY DEPEND ON THE ABILITY
OF FIFTY MEN TO HOLD THIS RIDGE FOR
FORTY-EIGHT HOURS!



THOSE FIFTY MEN, ONE RIFLE PLATOON AND A VICKERS MACHINE-GUN SECTION,
WERE ALREADY MOVING UP TO THE KUANA RIDGE, WITH THEM MARCHED A
VETERAN CALLED CON TRACEY. BUT HE WAS A SERGEANT NOW...



EVERY MAN IN THE DETACHMENT HAD BEEN IN BURMA SINCE THE BEGINNING. THEY HAD LEARNED TO FIGHT THE JAP VICIOUSLY, BUT THEY WERE STILL HUMAN ENOUGH TO GRIPE ...

"ALL THIS ... JUST SO WE CAN SQUAT IN THE SUN ON A PERISHING HILL? WHAT FOR, I'D LIKE TO KNOW?"

"YEAH, SARGE ... WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT THIS RIDGE, ANYWAY?"



CON TRACEY PAUSED. HE WAS THINKING OF ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER PLACE, WHEN MEN HAD MARCHED TO THEIR DEATHS WITHOUT KNOWING WHY.

"DON'T ASK *ME*, SOLDIER! I WASN'T THERE WHEN THEY THOUGHT UP THIS LITTLE NUMBER!"

"WELL, LET'S HOPE IT'S CUSHY! I COULD DO WITH A BREATH FROM JOHNNY JAP ..."



AT THE HEAD OF THE COLUMN, MAJOR SAM BARRETT HEARD THE LOUD, RUEFUL VOICES...

A BREATHER! IF ONLY THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WERE HEADING INTO! BUT THEY DON'T... AND I CAN'T TELL THEM...



STUMBLING DOGGEDLY BESIDE HIS SUPERIOR OFFICER, LIEUTENANT LES JACKSON NOTICED THE PENT-UP TENSION IN BARRETT'S FACE...

WHY THE BIG SECRET? WHY THE HECK CAN'T HE TELL *ME* WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT?



SAM BARRETT DID NOT SPEAK AGAIN UNTIL THEY REACHED THE RIDGE. THE HEAT WAS STIFLING UP THERE...

SERGEANT, I'M PUTTING MY H.Q. BEHIND THIS KNOLL! I WANT THE VICKERS SECTION SITED ON THE KNOLL ITSELF, AND THE RIFLEMEN DUG IN ALONG THE RIDGE SO THAT THE WHOLE NORTH SLOPE IS COVERED!

RIGHT, SIR! I'LL GET THE MEN TO WORK!



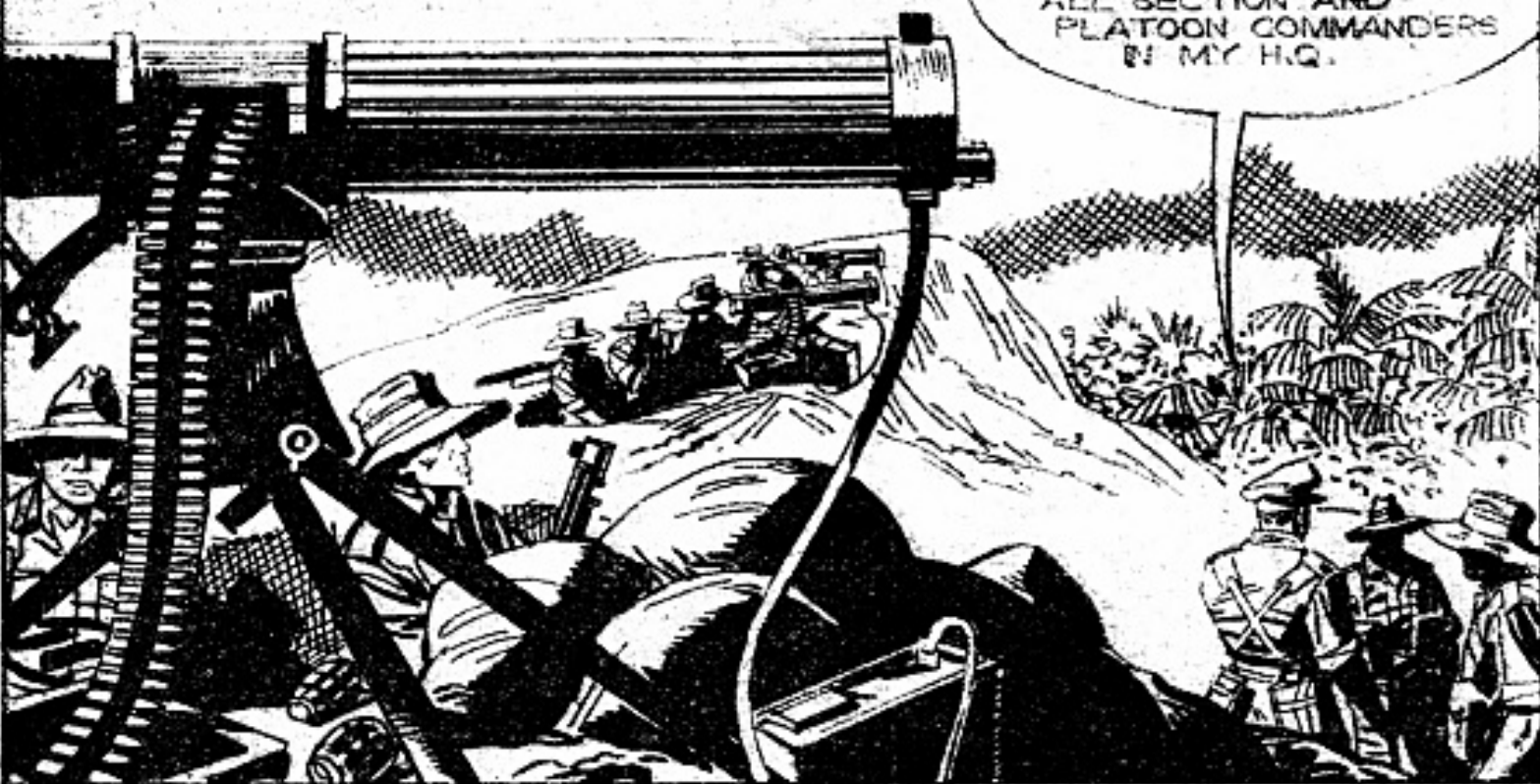
THE MEN GRUMBLED A BIT, BUT TRACEY GOT THEM WORKING. THE STEADY CLINK OF TRENCHING TOOLS ECHOED UNEASILY ACROSS THAT STRETCH OF SCRUB AND ROCK...

THIS IS NO ORDINARY HOLDING POSITION! WE'VE GOT ENOUGH AMMO TO LAST THREE DAYS! AND THE WAY WE'VE BEEN ORDERED TO DIG IN, IT'S AS IF WE'RE PREPARING FOR A SIEGE.



WITHIN SIX, EFFICIENT HOURS, THE TRENCHES HAD BEEN DUG AND THE MACHINE-GUNS SITED IN ENFILADE. THE LIGHT WAS FADING...

ONE MAN ON STAND-
TO IN EVERY SLIT
THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT...
AND EVERY NIGHT WE'RE
HERE! THEN I'LL SEE
ALL SECTION AND
PLATOON COMMANDERS
IN MY H.Q.



THE COMMAND POST WAS JUST A DEEP, FOUR-SIDED PIT, FURNISHED WITH AMMO CRATES AND THE RADIO.

SERGEANT, DETAIL HARRIS AND MITCHELL TO RIG UP SOME OF THOSE DEVILISH BOOBY-TRAPS THEY'RE SO FOND OF! THOSE TRAPS WILL BE OUR ALARM CLOCK! WHEN THE JAPS HIT THE BOTTOM OF THAT SLOPE... I WANT TO KNOW ABOUT IT!



LIEUTENANT JACKSON WAS ALMOST APOLOGETIC AS HE SPOKE UP ...

SIR! THIS... THIS
SECRECY! THE MEN
HAVE ALREADY
GUESSED THAT IT'S
GOING TO BE
TOUGH! BUT THAT'S
NOT THEIR GROUSE.
THEY WANT TO
KNOW WHY
WE'RE HERE...
WHAT THE
FIGHTING'S
ABOUT.

I'M SORRY, MISTER JACKSON!
ALL I CAN TELL YOU IS THIS...
IF THE JAPS COME THROUGH THOSE
HILLS, THEY'LL HAVE TO CROSS
KUANA RIDGE! WE'VE GOT TO STOP
THEM... IF IT TAKES THE LIFE OF
EVERY MAN IN THIS UNIT
TO DO SO!

BUT WHY,
SIR? WHAT
MAKES THIS
RIDGE SO
IMPORTANT?

SOMETHING LIKE ANGER FLARED IN BARRETT'S HAGGARD EYES... A BITTER, HELPLESS ANGER...

THERE'S NOTHING
I CAN TELL YOU...
NOTHING!
D'YOU HEAR?

SO THAT'S HOW
IT IS! FIGHT TO
THE LAST MAN...
AND NO QUESTIONS
ASKED.

AFTER THE MEETING, TRACEY WENT DOWN THE NORTH SLOPE IN THE CHILL, GATHERING DUSK. HARRIS AND MITCHELL WERE THERE, SOWING DEATH IN THE JUNGLE ...



NEARLY FINISHED,
SARGE! WE'VE SET
MOST OF THE
GRENADES!

YEAH...WITH THE
PINS OUT! IF THE OLD
JAP COMES CRAWLING
THROUGH HERE,
HE'S HAD IT!

ON THE FLANKS OF THE POSITION WHERE THE JAPS WOULD BE WALKING, STEN GUNS, SET AT AUTOMATIC, HAD BEEN FIXED IN THE TREES ...

I FEEL ALMOST SORRY FOR THE
NIPPO! THE MINUTE HE BUMPS THIS
STRING, HE'S GOING TO COP A
FAST DOSE OF LEAD
POISONING!

SAVE SOME OF THE GRIEF FOR US,
MITCH! WE'LL BE STUCK UP ON THIS
RIDGE LIKE A BUNCH OF AUNT
SALLIES!



THE DARKNESS CAME SUDDENLY. THE MEN ON STAND-TO STARED UNEASILY DOWN INTO THE SILKY SHADOWS...

CAN'T SEE A BLOOMING THING! D'YOU RECKON THEY'RE OUT THERE, EDDY?

DUNNO! IF THEY ARE, I WISH THEY'D TELL US WHAT THE HECK THIS IS ALL IN AID OF...



SERGEANT CON TRACEY WAS UNEASY, TOO. HE KNEW HOW QUICKLY AND QUIETLY THE LITTLE SOLDIER COULD MOVE...

COME ON, NIP... IF YOU'RE COMING! LET'S GET STARTED!



THE SLIGHT, TINNY RATTLE CAME FIRST. IT WAS FOLLOWED BY THE SUDDEN BLAST AND GLARE OF EXPLOSIVES...

JAPS! THEY MUST HAVE BUMPED THE GRENADES!

AAAGH!

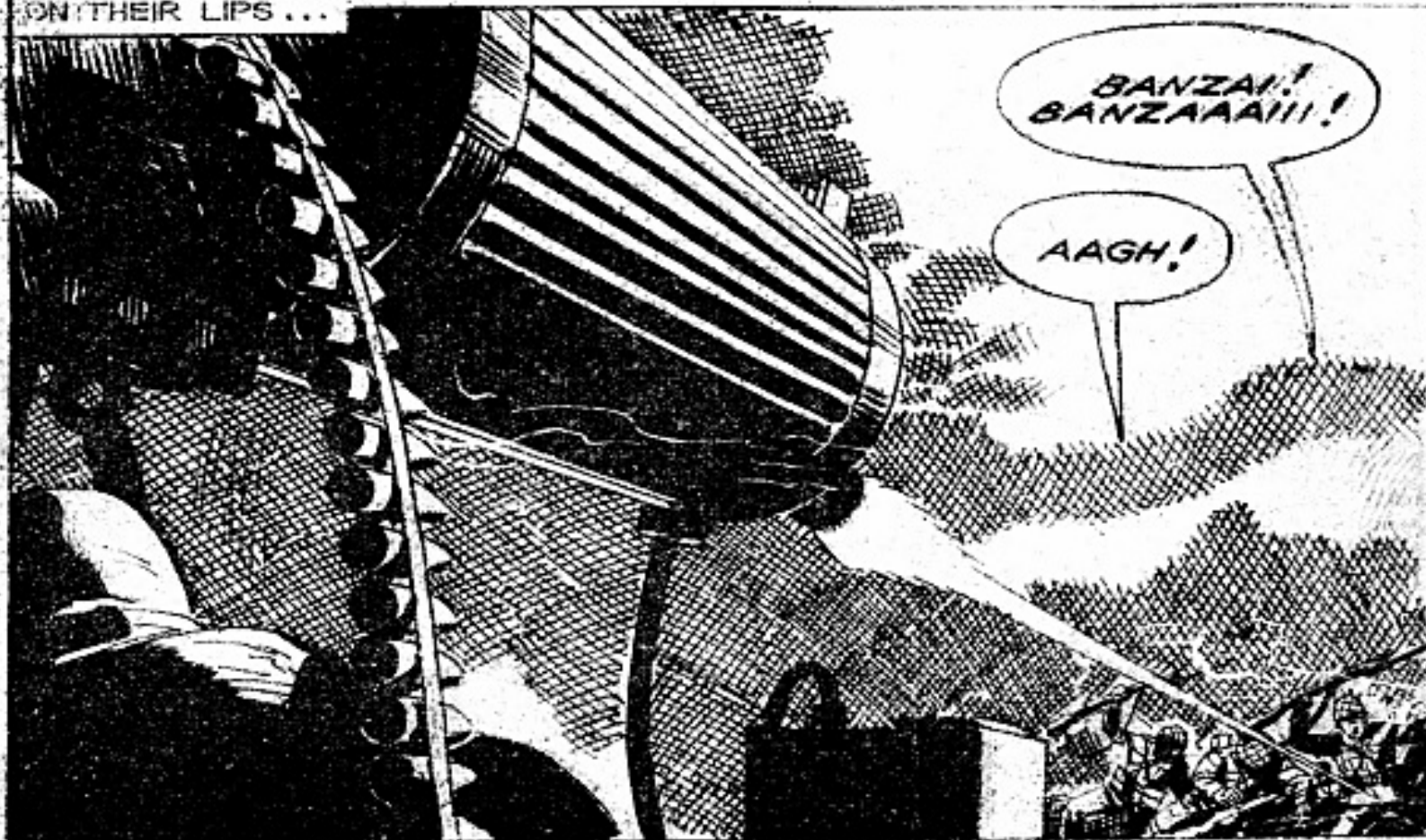
STAND-TO! FLARES, MISTER JACKSON...



THE VERY CARTRIDGE LOOPED OUT FROM THE TRENCHES, BURST OVER THE BLACK FACE OF THE RIDGE. IN THE STARK FLASH OF LIGHT, THEY SAW THE JAPS ...



THE GUNS ROARED ON KUANA RIDGE, BUILDING A TERRIBLE CONE OF STEEL, SMASHING DOWN THE STUBBY MEN WHO CHARGED WITH THE MAD BATTLE-CRY ON THEIR LIPS ...



THEIR FRONTAL ATTACK SWEEP ASIDE, A SMALL PARTY OF JAPS CAME ANGLING FOR THE KNOLL. IN THE DIN, NO-ONE HEARD MAJOR SAM BARRETT'S SOFT, CHOKING CRY...

KEEP AT IT,
MEN! THEY'RE
BREAKING!

UUHH...!

THE FIRST JAPANESE ATTACK CEASED AS ABRUPTLY AS IT HAD BEGUN. TRACEY AND LES JACKSON WERE CROUCHING OVER THE HOT MUZZLES OF THEIR GUNS WHEN ONE OF THE MEN CAME LUNGING FROM THE NIGHT...

FIRST ROUND TO US.
SERGEANT! DID YOU GET ANY
IDEA OF THEIR STRENGTH?

LIEUTENANT
JACKSON, SIR!
THE C.O. ...

SAM BARRETT WAS DEAD. THE MAN BENDING OVER HIS BODY HAD AN ENVELOPE IN HIS HAND...

I SEE...
THANKS,
SOLDIER!

THE MAJOR'S GONE, SIR!
BUT HE GAVE ME THIS
JUST BEFORE HE DIED...
TOLD ME TO GIVE IT
TO YOU...



LES JACKSON RIPPED THE ENVELOPE OPEN, READ THE NEATLY-TYPED ORDER. HE LOOKED UP THEN, WITH A HAGGARD LIGHT IN HIS EYES...

SO THAT'S WHY WE'RE HERE!
THAT'S WHY HE COULDN'T TELL
US! AND NOW I'M STUCK WITH
THE SAME RESPONSIBILITY...



THERE WERE MEN AROUND LES JACKSON. BUT HE LOOKED LONELY AS HE STUMBLED TOWARDS THE COMMAND POST. THE MEN WATCHED HIM GO...

SO JACKSON'S IN COMMAND!
MAYBE HE'LL PULL US OUT OF
HERE, NOW THAT THE GLORY
BOY'S BOUGHT IT!



MARK IT, SWAIN!
THE MAJOR WAS NO
GLORY BOY! I DON'T
RECKON HE WANTED TO
COME UP HERE ANY
MORE THAN WE DID.

PRIVATE NICK SWAIN SCOWLED. HE WAS BIG AND SULLEN... AND HE WANTED TO STAY ALIVE.

THEN WHY THE HECK ARE WE DEFENDING THIS RIDGE? WE ALL KNOW THE MAIN PUSH IS GOING IN UP-COUNTRY! YET WE GOTTA SIT HERE AND WAIT FOR THE JAP TO COME AND GIVE US A DOSE OF COLD STEEL!



THE MEN WERE SILENT. SWAIN'S BITTER WORDS HAD AN UNPLEASANT RING OF TRUTH...

I'M TELLING YOU, MATES... IF JACKSON DON'T SOON PULL US OUT OF HERE, I'LL KNOW THE REASON WHY! I AIN'T GONNA DIE SCRAPPING FOR A SCRUFFY BIT OF JUNGLE...

YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING THERE, NICK!



Chapter 3. *Hell on the Hill*

THERE WERE NO MORE ATTACKS THAT NIGHT. IT WAS JUST AFTER DAWN WHEN THE JAPS BEGAN TO SHELL THE RIDGE WITH FOUR-INCH MORTARS...



THE BOMBARDMENT WAS ACCURATE AND DEADLY. THERE WERE DEAD MEN IN THE BRITISH TRENCHES WHEN THE JAPANESE FOOT SOLDIERS CAME OUT OF THE JUNGLE...



COVERED BY THE SMOKE FROM THE MORTAR ATTACK, THE FIRST WAVE OF JAPS GOT TO WITHIN THIRTY YARDS OF THE RIDGE-TOP BEFORE THE BRITISH COULD ENGAGE THEM...



MOST OF THE JAPS DIED IN THE FIRST, POINT-BLANK VOLLEY. BUT SOME OF THEM GOT THROUGH...



IT WAS SERGEANT CON TRACEY WHO LED THE RUSH TO CLOSE THE BREACH...

GET INTO 'EM! SMASH THE LITTLE DEVILS!



AGAIN, THE ATTACK FAILED, BEATEN BACK BY THE LASH OF THE VICKERS, THE RUTHLESS COURAGE OF THE PITIFULLY FEW MEN ON KUANA RIDGE...

YAHOO... LOOK AT THOSE JAPS RUN! WE CLOBBERED 'EM THAT TIME, NICK!

YEAH! BUT THEY WIPED OUT HALF THE COMPANY! WHAT ABOUT THE NEXT TIME... AND THE TIME AFTER THAT...!



CON TRACEY HEARD THE SHRILL, BITTER VOICE OF PRIVATE SWAIN AND SWUNG ROUND ANGRILY...

ALL RIGHT, SWAIN... THAT'S ENOUGH!

WELL, **YOU** TELL US, SARGE! WHAT **ARE** WE DOING HERE? WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT THIS STRIP OF KUNAI GRASS?



THE SERGEANT PAUSED, FOR HE WANTED AN ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION HIMSELF. BUT HIS VOICE WAS FIRM...

I DON'T KNOW THAT, SWAIN! BUT MISTER JACKSON KNOWS... AND THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME!

SURE, JACKSON KNOWS! THEN WHY DON'T HE SHARE THE BIG SECRET WITH US?

SWAIN'S RIGHT, SARGE! WE GOT A RIGHT TO KNOW...



TRACEY WAS ABOUT TO REPLY WHEN THE HARSH WORDS CAME CRACKLING ALONG THE RIDGE... THE WORDS THEY HAD LEARNED TO DREAD...



THE JAPS WERE CONCENTRATING ON THE GUN-PITS THIS TIME. THEIR ARMS WERE WAVING AND THE FAINT, SOFT SIGNS IN THE AIR WERE FOLLOWED BY THIN, WHIPLASH EXPLOSIONS...

BLAZES!
THEY'RE THROWING
SPRING GRENADES!



SPRING GRENADES... FIRED BY CRUDE CATAPULTS FIXED TO THE HP. ONE OF THEM LANDED IN THE AMMUNITION PIT SUPPLYING A VICKERS GUN, EXPLODING LIKE A HORRIBLE FIRECRACKER...



THE JAPS WERE SURGING TOWARDS THE SILENT GUN WHEN SERGEANT CON-TRACEY REACHED IT, PUSHING THE BROKEN BODIES ASIDE...



BUT THE MACHINE-GUN WAS STILL WORKING. THE JAPS FOUND THAT OUT... JUST BEFORE THE SUDDEN, AWFUL ZONE OF STEEL CUT THEM DOWN...



BROODING, PONDEROUS SILENCE ENVELOPED THE RIDGE AGAIN. CON TRACEY SAT THERE, BEHIND THE GUN, STARING AT THE BODIES...

IT'S CRAZY... ALL THIS FIGHTING AND KILLING... JUST TO HOLD ON TO A USELESS PIMPLE OF EARTH!

NICE WORK, SERGEANT! I THOUGHT WE'D HAD IT, THAT TIME!



THE VOICE OF LIEUTENANT JACKSON ONLY INTERRUPTED THE SERGEANT'S RISING ANGER...

SO FAR, WE'VE HELD THEM! BUT IT LOOKS BAD, TRACEY! WE'RE DOWN TO TWENTY FIT MEN!

TWENTY? THEN WHY DON'T WE PULL OUT & FALL BACK TO THAT GULLY BETWEEN THE RIDGE... SET UP NEW POSITIONS?

THE GREY-FACED LIEUTENANT WAS BITING HIS LIP, SHAKING HIS HEAD AT TRACEY...

ALL RIGHT, SIR... SO WE SIT ON THIS RIDGE, BUT WHY? WHY DO WE HAVE TO COMMIT SUICIDE?

I CAN'T TELL YOU, TRACEY! I WISH TO HEAVEN I COULD...



IT WAS JUST THEN THAT THE SECOND MORTAR ATTACK BEGAN. THE FEW MEN LEFT ALIVE IN THE TRENCHES COVERED AS THE WORLD SHUDDERED AND BOILED AROUND THEM...



BY THE KNOLL, LIEUTENANT JACKSON HAD TURNED AWAY FROM TRACEY. HE WAS RUNNING TOWARDS THE TRENCHES WHEN A MORTAR SHELL EXPLODED SIX FEET AWAY FROM HIM...



THE BARRAGE THRASHED ON. THE EARTH SHUDDERED CONTINUOUSLY AS TRACEY LIFTED THE LIMP, BROKEN BODY OF THE OFFICER...





THE FAINT, CHOKING WORDS DREW STRENGTH FROM SOMEWHERE...

IF THE JAPS TOOK THIS RIDGE, THEY'D BE IN A POSITION TO CUT THE ROAD... HOLD UP THE CAMPAIGN FOR MONTHS! THAT'S WHY THE MEN COULDN'T BE TOLD! IF ONE OF THEM... IS CAPTURED...

CAPTURED! OF COURSE...!



TRACEY WAS GETTING THE GIST OF IT NOW.

...IF THE POOR DEVIL
KNEW ABOUT THE BUILD-UP,
THE NIPS WOULD SOON TORTURE
IT OUT OF HIM! THE WHOLE
OFFENSIVE WOULD BE
THREATENED! I UNDERSTAND
NOW, SIR... WHY YOU COULDN'T
TELL THE MEN... WHY WE'VE
GOT TO HOLD THIS
RIDGE...

BUT THE LIEUTENANT COULD NOT ANSWER. SERGEANT CON TRACEY WAS IN
COMMAND OF THE MEN ON KUANA RIDGE...

...AND I'VE GOT TO
MAKE THEM FIGHT, AND
DIE... WITH NO QUESTIONS
ASKED! AM I TOUGH
ENOUGH FOR THAT?



Chapter 4. *Burden of Command*

THE MORTAR BARRAGE WAS THINNING. IN HIS TRENCH, PRIVATE NICK SWAIN WAS YELLING THROUGH THE BRUTAL CONCUSSIONS ...

THIS IS CRAZY! IT'S SUICIDE!
THE NIPS CAN HAVE THIS ROTTEN
RIDGE! I'M NOT GOING TO DIE
LIKE A RAT IN A TRAP!

SHUT UP, SWAIN, AND STAND
TO! ANY MINUTE NOW, AND
THOSE LITTLE PERISHERS
WILL BE COMING UP HERE.



THE BARRAGE CEASED ABRUPTLY. THEY CROUCHED THERE, IN THE HOT SILENCE, WAITING FOR THE SCREAMING MEN TO ERUPT FROM THE JUNGLE ...

COME ON, NIP ...
IF YOU'RE COMING!
GET IT OVER
WITH!

THEY'RE
PLAYING ON
OUR NERVES!

SOMEONE OUGHT TO
TELL THEM THEY'VE GOT
NOTHING TO BEAT!
WE'RE THE ONLY ONES
LEFT ALIVE ...!



BY NOW, CON TRACEY HAD MADE A COMPLETE CHECK OF THE SAVAGED BRITISH POSITIONS. HE LOOKED ONLY BRIEFLY AT THE SHATTERED COMMAND POST...

THE RADIO'S HAD IT...
WHICH MEANS I CAN'T EVEN
FIND OUT HOW LONG WE'VE
GOT TO HOLD THIS RIDGE!
NOT THAT IT MAKES MUCH
DIFFERENCE, ANYWAY...



THE SCUFFLE OF BOOTS MADE HIM TURN. THERE WERE ONLY TWELVE RAGGED MEN BEHIND NICK SWAIN. THE BIG PRIVATE LOOKED UGLY, AND DANGEROUS...

YOU FOOLS! GET
BACK TO YOUR
TRENCHES!

WE SAW JACKSON'S
BODY, TRACEY... SO
WE KNOW YOU'RE IN
COMMAND! YOU'RE
GOING TO PULL US
OUT, AREN'T YOU?

YOU'VE GOT TO,
SARGE! WE CAN
STILL GET OUT DOWN
THE SOUTH SIDE...
TAKE OUR CHANCES
WITH THE JUNGLE...



CON TRACEY SHOOK HIS HEAD. THE WORDS CAME OUT, HARD AND CRUEL.

WE'RE NOT MOVING OUT!
MAYBE WE CAN'T HOLD THIS
RIDGE MUCH LONGER, BUT
WE'RE GOING TO TRY!

IT'S NO GOOD, TRACEY!
IF YOU WANT TO STAY HERE
AND DIE...YOU'RE WELCOME!
BUT WE'RE GETTING OUT!



THE SERGEANT'S TOMMY-GUN SWUNG UPWARDS. CON TRACEY KNEW NOW WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO BE HATED...

YOU HEARD WHAT I SAID,
SWAIN! WE'RE STAYING! I'LL
NAIL THE FIRST MAN WHO
TRIES TO MAKE A BREAK!

DON'T BE A
FOOL, TRACEY!
YOU CAN'T
STOP US!



THE SERGEANT MIGHT HAVE PULLED THE TRIGGER. IT WAS THE SUDDEN, DISTANT CRACKLE OF FANATICAL VOICES THAT STOPPED HIM...

**BANZAI!
BANZAAAA!!!**

HERE
THEY
COME!

TWO OF YOU, MAN
THAT VICKERS! THE
REST, SPREAD OUT
ALONG THE KNOLL!

DESPERATION LENT ACCURACY TO THE HANDFUL OF BRITISH GUNS AS THEIR FIRE MET THE JAPS HALF-WAY UP THE RIDGE.

AAAGH!

**AIEEE!
THEY FIGHT LIKE
MADMEN!**



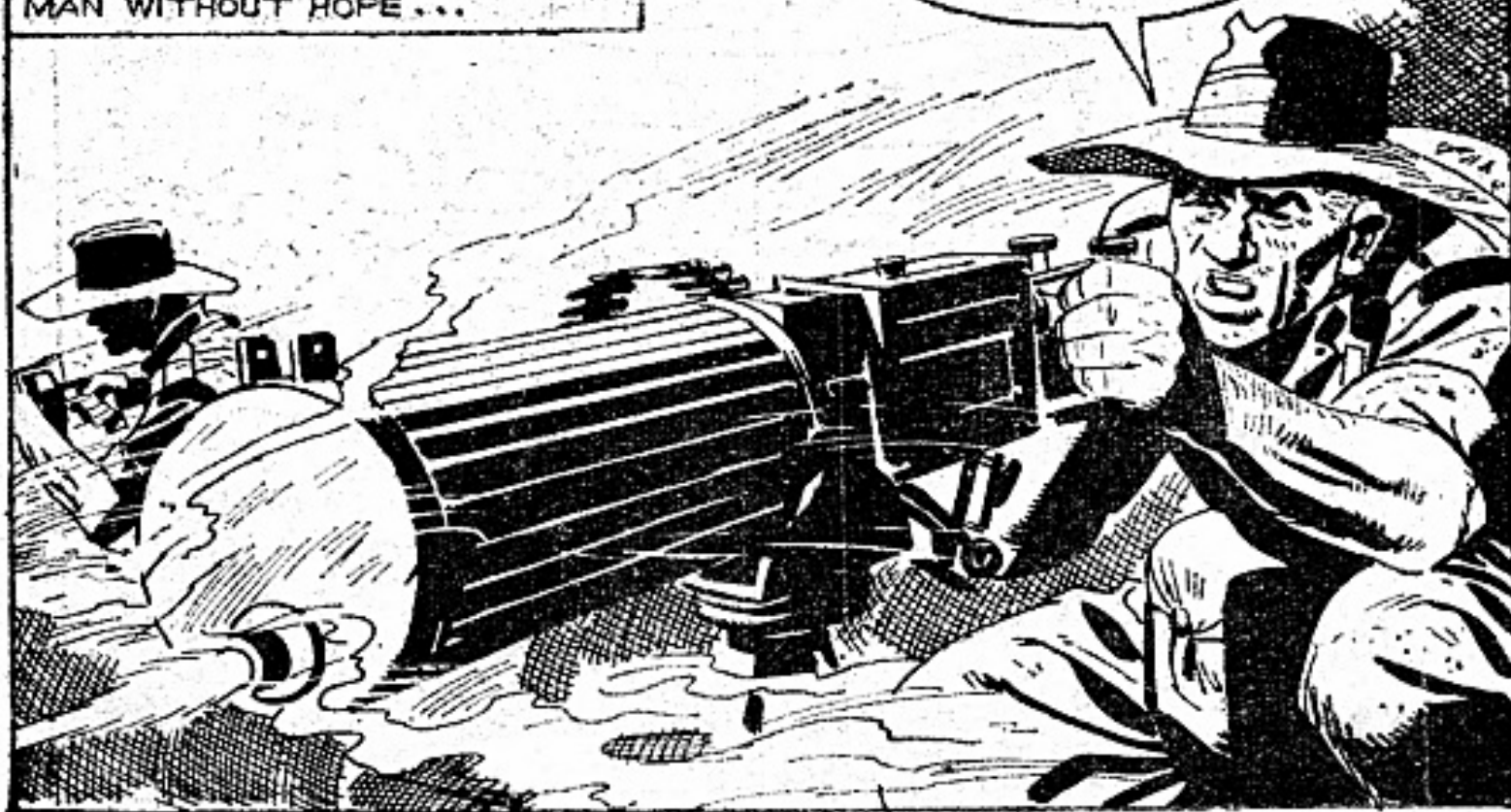
THE JAPS CAME ON, FIRING WILDLY FROM THE HIP. THERE WERE ONLY SIX MEN NOW, FIGHTING TO HOLD THAT STUMP OF ROCK...

COME ON, YOU LITTLE PERISHERS!
COME ON!



THE JAPS RECOILED FROM THE STEADY, MERCILESS BELLOW OF THE VICKERS. NICK SWAIN WAS MANNING THE GUN... FIGHTING WITH THE DESPERATION OF A MAN WITHOUT HOPE...

IF I'VE GOTTA
DIE, I'LL TAKE A
FEW OF YOU WITH
ME...



BUT NICK SWAIN DID NOT DIE. ONE MOMENT, THE SHAPES WERE THERE, A SCREAMING, STUMBLING MASS OF INFANTRY. THEN CON TRACEY WAS YELLING ...



HOLD IT,
SWAIN! THEY'VE
GONE!

GONE ... ? BUT
I DON'T GET IT!
WONDER WHAT THE
LITTLE BLIGHTERS
ARE COOKING UP
NOW ?

CON TRACEY WAS LOOKING AT THE UGLY PATTERN OF DEATH ... THE TWISTED SHAPES OF MEN WHO HAD FOUGHT AND DIED FOR KUANA RIDGE ...



MAYBE THEY FIGURE THEY'VE
LOST ENOUGH MEN! THEY KNOW
THERE ISN'T MUCH TO STOP
THEM NOW!

YEAH! WE'RE ALL
THAT'S LEFT NOW,
GARGE! JUST YOU...
AND ME ...

THE TWO MEN WERE SEARCHING THE SILENT JUNGLE WITH GRIM EYES. THEY DID NOT NOTICE THE SLIGHT MOVEMENT AMONG THE HUDDLED BODIES, CLOSE TO THE KNOLL ...

WHAT A WAY TO GO ... KILLED BY A MORTAR BOMB ON THIS ROTTEN RIDGE! IT JUST DON'T SEEM RIGHT, SARGE ...



THE SINGLE RIFLE SHOT CRACKED LOUDLY ACROSS THE RIDGE. NICK SWAIN WAS STILL GRIPING WHEN THE BULLET HIT HIM ...

AAAGH!

SWAIN...!



THE WOUNDED JAP WAS RISING TO HIS KNEES WHEN CON TRACEY PICKED HIM OUT. THE FANATICAL LITTLE SOLDIER HAD NO CHANCE TO GET IN A SECOND SHOT...



IT TOOK ALL TRACEY'S STRENGTH TO DRAG NICK SWAIN BEHIND THE KNOLL. THE BIG MAN WAS GASPING PAINFULLY...

GOTTA GO... SOMETIME... I SUPPOSE, SARGE. BUT WHY HERE... ON THIS USELESS... STRIP OF DIRT?

WE HELD THIS RIDGE TO STOP THE JAPS SEEING OUR MAIN FORCE. ADVANCING DOWN THE MAUNGDAW ROAD, IT **HAD** TO BE DONE!



THE BIG PRIVATE DIED WITH A SMILE ON HIS LIPS. NOW TRACEY WAS ALONE...



THE UNCANNY SILENCE WAS SHATTERED BY THE HIGH-PITCHED VOICE OF A JAPANESE OFFICER...

COME OUT,
BRITISH TOMMEE!
SURRENDER TO
US-- WE NO
HARM YOU...



TRACEY'S MOUTH TWISTED IN A BITTER GRIN. HE KNEW HOW MUCH VALUE TO PLACE ON THE JAPANESE PROMISES. AT BEST, SURRENDER WOULD MEAN THE LIVING DEATH OF A JAP P.O.W. CAMP-- AT THE WORST, BRUTAL TORTURE IN AN ATTEMPT TO EXTRACT ANY INFORMATION HE MIGHT KNOW. . .

NOW I KNOW HOW CAPTAIN FANE FELT. HE KNEW HE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO STAND THE JAPS' TORTURE, SO HE WAS PREPARED TO TAKE HIS OWN LIFE. BUT THERE IS ANOTHER WAY... IF I'VE GOT TO DIE, I'M GOING TO DIE FIGHTING!



TRACEY CLIMBED SLOWLY TO HIS FEET. SILHOUETTED AGAINST THE SKY-LINE, A PERFECT TARGET FOR THE JAP RIFLES, HE STOOD TRIGGERING HIS TOMMY-GUN AND SHOUTING HIS DEFIANCE...

HERE I COME, YOU PERISHIN?
NIPS! BETTER KILL ME
FAST-- OR I'LL
KILL YOU!



THE JAPANESE WERE TAKEN BY SURPRISE. A RAGGED VOLLEY OF HASTILY-FIRED RIFLE SHOTS CRACKED HARMLESSLY OVER TRACEY'S HEAD. NEXT MOMENT, HE WAS RUNNING DOWN THE RIDGE, HIS TOMMY-GUN CHATTERING...



SUDDENLY TWO EXPLOSIONS BOOMED OUT FROM AMONGST THE JAP POSITIONS. TWO MORTAR BOMBS PLOUGHED UP THE GROUND BETWEEN THEIR FOXHOLES. FIRED WITH THE MADNESS OF BATTLE, TRACEY FAILED TO REALISE WHAT HAD HAPPENED...



THOSE MORTAR BOMBS HERALDED THE TURN OF THE TIDE. UNKNOWN TO TRACEY, A FULL COMPANY OF MEN, JUST ARRIVED FROM THE RESERVE UNITS, WAS BACKING HIM UP NOW. THE JAPS RANKS BROKE AND SCATTERED...



AT LAST, EXHAUSTED, TRACEY STOPPED AND LOOKED AROUND HIM, DAZEDLY. HE HAD RUN HIMSELF TO A STANDSTILL... BUT HE HAD BORNE A CHARMED LIFE DURING HIS ONE-MAN ATTACK. THE CAPTAIN COMMANDING THE NEWLY-ARRIVED UNIT, CAME UP TO HIM...

YOU CAN TAKE IT EASY NOW, SERGEANT. THE FOURTEENTH ARMY'S HERE. THE MAIN ATTACK HAS BEEN LAUNCHED, AND WE'RE MOPPING THE JAPS UP BEFORE THEY GET A CHANCE TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT.





THE CAPTAIN LOOKED DOWN. MANY MEN HAD DIED... BUT THEY HAD DIED FIGHTING, DIED IN THE SPIRIT THAT SERGEANT CON TRACEY HAD SHOWN IN HIS SINGLE-HANDED CHARGE ON THE JAP FORCES. THE SPIRIT THAT HAD DEFENDED THE KUANA RIDGE BURNED ON IN THE MEN WHO WOULD CONTINUE THE FIGHT...



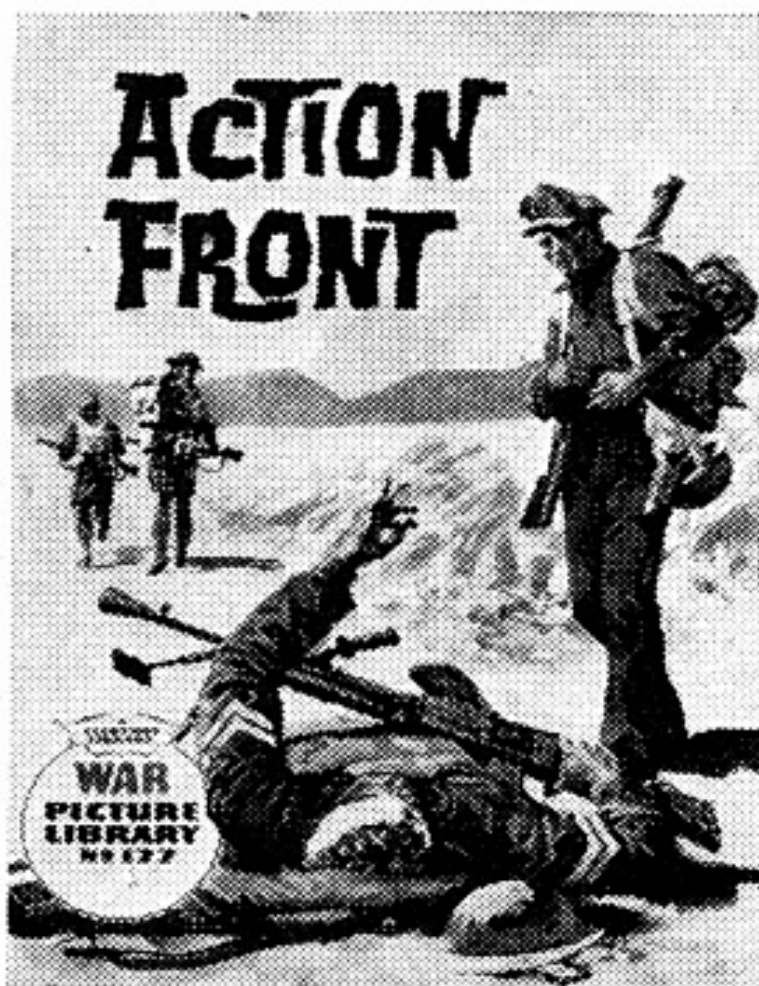
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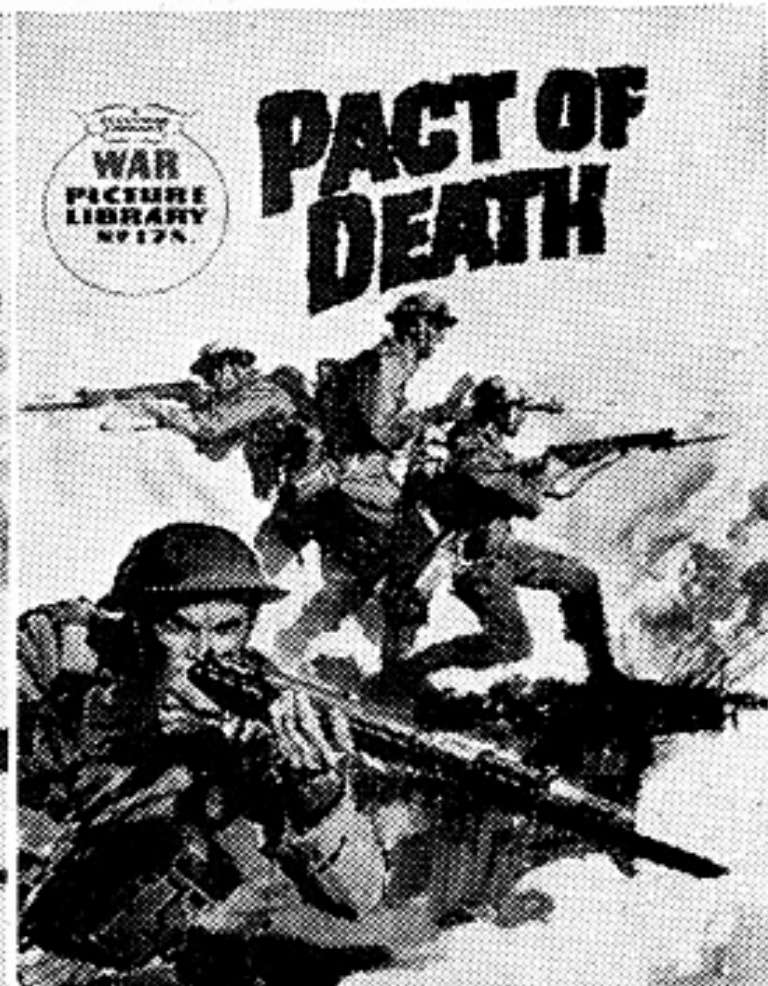
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